

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /058 W
-----181801Z 125744 /53

P R 181642Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9600
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BE
SUBJECT: TINDEMANS WINS BIG IN BELGIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER LEO TINDEMANS SCORES A STRIKING PERSONAL
VICTORY IN BELGIUM'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SUNDAY AND BECOMES
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ODDS-ON FAVORITE TO HEAD A NEW GOVERNMENT. HIS CHRISTIAN PARTY
REGISTERS A STRONG ADVANCE IN FLANDERS AND UNEXPECTEDLY MAKES GAINS
ALSO IN WALLONIA. THE SOCIALIST PARTY, THE PRESENT OPPOSITION LEADER
,
ALSO IMPROVES ON ITS 1974 SHOWING BUT NOT AS MUCH AS IT HOPED. THE
DAY'S BIG LOSER IS THE FRANCOPHONE LINGUISTIC PARTY, RASSEMBLEMENT
WALLON, WHICH LOST HALF ITS VOTES IN WALLONIA AND TWO-THIRDS OF ITS

SEATS IN PARLIAMENT. AFTER A MID-DAY CABINET MEETING, TINDEMANS SUBMITS THE RESIGNATION OF HIS GOVERNMENT TO THE KING - A MOVE DESIGNED TO FREE HIS HAND TO CONSTRUCT A NEW, PRESUMABLY BROADER-BASED GOVERNMENT. THE KING ASKS TINDEMANS TO REMAIN IN CARETAKER STATUS WHILE INTER-PARTY NEGOTIATIONS ON A NEW GOVERNMENT TAKE PLACE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN SUNDAY'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, INITIATED BY PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS 40 DAYS AGO TO CLEAR THE MIASMIC AIR OF PPOLITICAL BELGIUM, THE LOW-KEYED ANTWERPER SCORED A MAJOR PERSONAL TRIUMPH AND CARRIED HIS SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY TO SOLID GAINS. IN HIS ANTWERP CONSTITUENCY TINDEMANS BROKE THE BELGIAN RECORD FOR INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCE VOTES. POLITICAL OBSERVERS AGREED TODAY THAT THE TINDEMANS PERSONALITY WAS CHIEFLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUBSTANTIAL GAINS OF HIS CHRISTIAN PEOPLES PARTY IN FLANDERS AND THE STRONG SHOWING (AGAINST EXPECTATIONS) OF THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY IN WALLONIA.

2. TINDEMANS CONVENED HIS CABINET AT NOON TODAY AND THEREAFTER CALLED ON THE KING TO SUBMIT HIS GOVERNMENT'S RESIGNATION. THE KING ASKED HIM TO STAY ON IN A CARETAKER ROLE UNTIL A NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED. THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION WAS TACTICAL. HE WILL CERTAINLY BE CALLED UPON TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT. RESIGNATION OF HIS PRESENT CABINET WILL ENABLE HIM TO CONSTRUCT A NEW - AND PRESUMABLY MORE BROADLY-BASED COALITION - FROM SCRATCH. IN HIS FIRST POST-ELECTION STATEMENTS TINDEMANS DECLINED TO TIP HIS HAND ON WHAT KIND OF COALITION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON HE WILL SEEK TO MAKE. THE MAKEUP OF THE NEW HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - THE CONTROLLING LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT - PERMITS HIM THE LUXURY OF SEVERAL OPTIONS.

3. WITH CALCULATIONS UNDER BELGIUM'S COMPLEX PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM STILL INCOMPLETE AT NIGHTFALL MONDAY, THE FOLLOWING LINEUP OF THE NEW LOWER HOUSE APPEARED TO BE REASONABLY SURE (FIGURES IN PARENTHESIS INDICATE THE NUMBER SEATS WON IN THE MARCH, 1974 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS):
SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY - 80 SEATS (72), CONSISTING OF 56 (50) CHRISTIAN PEOPLES (FLEMISH) PARTY AND 24 (22) SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (FRANCOPHONE) PARTY.
BELGIAN SOCIALIST PARTY - 62 SEATS (59), CONSISTING OF 36 (33) FRANCOPHONE SEATS AND 27 (26) FLEMISH SEATS.
LIBERAL PARTY - 32 SEATS (33), CONSISTING OF 19 (21) FLEMISH LIBERALS, 11 (9) WALLOON LIBERALS AND TWO (3) BRUSSELS LIBERALS.
VOLKSUNIE (THE FLEMISH LINGUISTIC PARTY)-20 SEATS (22).

FRONT DEMOCRATIQUE FRANCOPHONE (THE BRUSSELS LINGUISTIC PARTY)-
10 SEATS (9).
RASSEMBLEMENT WALLON - 4 SEATS (13).
BELGIAN COMMUNIST PARTY - 4 SEATS (4).

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4. MINOR CHANGES REMAIN POSSIBLE. THE COMMUNIST PARTY, WHICH POLLED
5.5 PERCENT IN WALLONIA IN 1974, SUFFERED HEAVY REVERSES THERE SUNDAY
.
FINAL CALCULATIONS IN HAINAUT PROVINCE MAY SWING TWO SEATS PRESENTLY
HELD BY COMMUNISTS TO SOCIALIST AND SOCIAL CHRISTIAN CANDIDATES,
RESPECTIVELY. LIKewise, FINAL CALCULATIONS IN BRUSSELS MAY CHANGE
ONE OR TWO OCCUPANTS OF THE CAPITAL'S 34 HOUSE SEATS.

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5. THE FOLLOWING SUMS UP IN CAPSULE FORM THE FORTUNES OF THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES IN SUNDAY'S BALLOTING:

TINDEMANS' CHRISTIAN PEOPLES PARTY REGISTERED A SATISFYING GAIN OF ABOUT 10 PERCENT IN FLANDERS, AS FORECAST. ITS SISTER SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY SUCCESSIVELY STOOD OFF SOCIALIST EFFORTS TO SPLIT THE PARTY ON IDEOLOGICAL LINES AND, IN FACT, INCREASED ITS STRENGTH IN FRANCOPHONE BELGIUM.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAD A MIXED RESULT: IT HELD ITS OWN IN FLANDERS AGAINST A PREDICTION OF A SMALL SLUMP, GAINED IN WALLONIA BUT NOT AS MUCH AS IT HOPED AND UNEXPECTEDLY SUFFERED IN BRUSSELS AT THE HANDS OF THE CAPITAL'S MILITANT FRANCOPHONE PARTY.

THE LIBERAL PARTY LIKEWISE HAD UPS AND DOWNS: THE UP WAS A SOLID ADVANCE IN WALLONIA AT RW'S EXPENSE, THE DOWNS WERE A STINGING SETBACK IN FLANDERS AND A LESSER LOSS TO FDF IN BRUSSELS.

THE THREE ONE-ISSUE LINGUISTIC PARTIES HAD VARYING FORTUNES, BUT OVERALL IT WAS NOT A GREAT DAY FOR BELGIUM'S LINGUISTIC MILITANTS. WHOSE ERRATIC BEHAVIOR AS A MEMBER OF THE TINDEMANS COALITION BROUGHT ABOUT SUNDAY'S ELECTIONS, SUFFERED AN ELECTORAL DEBACLE, VOLKSUNIE IN FLANDERS HAD A DISAPPOINTING REVERSE. ONLY FDF HELD ITS GROUND FIRMLY IN BRUSSELS.

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6. COMMENT: IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT THE SOCIAL CRHISTIANS AND THE LIBERALS - PARTNERS IN THE OUTGOING COALITION - HAVE ENOUGH SEATS TO FORM A MAJORITY GOVERNMENT ON THEIR OWN. THIS GIVES TINDEMANS LEVERAGE IN HIS PROSPECTIVE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY ON THE FORMATION OF A LARGE COALITION, WHICH HE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY TRY TO CREATE. HE COULD ALSO ARRANGE A MAJORITY COALITION WITH SOME OF THE LINGUISTIC PARTIES. IN SHORT, THE QUESTION BEING ASKED ON THE MORNING AFTER IS NOT WHO WILL HEAD THE NEXT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT BUT WHAT IS TEINDEMANS PLEASURE.

RENNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BRUSSE03815
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770134-0307
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770448/aaaabpmr.tel
Line Count: 208
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 76c9cba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2779780
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TINDEMANS WINS BIG IN BELGIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER LEO TINDEMANS SCORES A STR
TAGS: PINT, BE, (TINDEMANS, LEO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbcr://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/76c9cba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009